

REVERED ELDERS

PART - 2

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Lesson - 1**Hazrat Imam-e-Azam
Abu Haneefa (R.A.)¹**

Whenever any need arises for knowing what is permissible and what is not under shariah, or what is lawful and what is not, and why a particular act has been made optional and not obligatory, we have a ready reckoner compiled by a great jurist, Hazrat Imam Abu Haneefa (R.A.). His taking up of this great task is an interesting story full of morals and advice. Sabit was a merchant of Kufa. He had a son No'man who was very intelligent and wise. No'man became Abu Haneefa after being educated in Islamic theology. Since he mastered the legal system and became a chief interpreter of Islamic jurisprudence, he was referred as Imam-e-Azam. So he is known as Hazrat Imam-e-Azam Abu Haneefa. Let us know more about him.

Imam-e-Azam was born in 80 A.H. at Kufa. He took his early education at home alone. Although there were great teachers and scholars as well as institutions at Kufa, Sabit did not admit his son to any of these institutions. Nor sent him to any of these private tutors. He taught his son himself till the boy turned sixteen years old. In the spare time he instructed the boy in trade and commerce. The father died when the boy was sixteen. Now the responsibility of looking after the business fell on his shoulders. He had learnt quite a lot about shop-keeping and trade. In a few years after the death of his father, he developed the business quite a lot. Simultaneously he started a cloth spinning unit where high quality cloth was spun. This cloth gained market soon and was in great demand.

He was nineteen years old when a very healthy and profitable turning point came in his life. Once he was going to a merchant for

seeking certain clarifications when he came across a very proficient and scholarly teacher of kufa namely Hazrat Imam Sho'abi (R.A.). He saluted the teacher and stood aside. The Imam reciprocated the salutation, stopped, looked at him and asked:

"Where are you going, dear boy?"

He said: "I am going to a merchant."

Allama listened and said: "Oh! no my boy I meant to whom are you going for studies."

Young Abu Haneefa blushed, and replied: "Sir, I do not study with anybody."

Allama was all affection. He advised: "You appear quite brilliant. The company of scholars will bring you respect and honour." This wise recommendation moved the young boy so much that he did not go to the merchant. He went directly to his residence and narrated the whole incident to his mother who was a very religious and pious lady. She was glad to hear the wise counsel. She said:

"My dear boy, you must go in for getting instructions in theology and religion."

Seeking thus the consent of the mother, he went to Allama Hammad (R.A.), who was running the largest religious institution in Kufa. He granted admission to Abu Haneefa in his school. Allah, the Almighty, had blessed Abu Haneefa with sagacity and good memory. He used to listen very attentively the lessons and memorised whatever was taught. He put in lot of efforts and hard work which paid very rich dividends. Within two years he outpaced all other students. Allama Hammad was very happy. Imam Abu Haneefa did not rest with getting instructions at this school alone. He used his spare hours to present himself before other great masters of religion like Imam Sho'abi, Imam Abu Ishaq and Hazrat Hasham Bin Urwah. Thus he utilised all opportunities of getting educated from several great scholars of the times. And in a short period of about three years,

he became famous in and around Kufa as a scholar. Men talked of No'man as a would-be reputed and great scholar.

Representing His Teacher

During his studentship days, once Hazrat Hammad had to leave Kufa for Basra for a short period. He delegated his duties to Abu Haneefa. So Abu Haneefa acted as the mentor at the institution. He even attended to other duties. Whenever people came to the institution for seeking solution to their problems he solved them. He used to note down in a notebook both the problems and their solution which he decided upon. Allama Hammad returned after two months. During this period, he solved sixty problems. When his master returned, he produced his notebook. The master studied all of the problems and solutions, pointed out the flaws in a few and appreciated greatly the solutions in a majority of the cases. When this news spread in Kufa, people relied on Imam Abu Haneefa for the solution of their problems. And when Allama Hammad breathed his last, the people urged him to occupy the place of his master. Thus Imam Abu Haneefa became the guiding star in the most renowned religious institution of Kufa.

His method of influencing institutions was quite effective and unique. He used to place the salient features of the topic of discourse before his students and sought their individual opinion about every point raised. He listened to every student intently and asked the other students to comment on the opinion of their companion. In the end he extended his expert opinion and comments. This method had its effect. It augmented their discerning and critical capacities while being instructed in the subject. This produced a few very learned scholars among his students. Imam Abu Yusuf and Imam Muhammad were two such students.

Thirst For Knowledge

Although Hazrat Abu Haneefa had become a great scholar, he

was never satisfied. The more he learnt, the more was his thirst for seeking knowledge increased. So he travelled to Makkah. There were many schools where Hadith was being taught. He visited all these madrasas. The institution of Hazrat Ata' had collected the Traditions from 200 companions of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh).¹ He first approached Hazrat Ata' and got instructions in the science of Hadith. On par with Hazrat Ata's institution was another school. It was patronised by Hazrat 'Ikramah (R.A.).² He enrolled with him also and got instructed. After completing the courses, he proceeded to Madina where two highly learned close relations of the Prophet (pbuh) lived. They were Hazrat Imam Baqar and Imam Jafer Sadiq (R.A.). Imam Abu Haneefa first met Imam Baqar who had heard about Abu Haneefa already. He posed a few questions and Abu Haneefa's answer pleased Imam Baqar so much that he hugged him and blessed him. Imam Abu Haneefa used to declare that all the details about the religion have emanated from the family of the Prophet, hence the supreme experts in religious matters are the family members of the Prophet. In fact he frequently visited the places, met the scholars there and used to find out the personalities alive from the family of the beloved Prophet.

The journey from Kufa to Basra, from Basra to Makkah and from Makkah to Madina did not merely get him educated in the science of Hadith. An equally important thing happened. The scholars from all these places recognised his devoted loyalty to the Islamic jurisprudence, Qur'anic wisdom and yearning for Hadith knowledge and acknowledged his greatness. Imam Sho'abi considered him an embodiment of knowledge. Although Imam Abu Haneefa attained a highly reputable and enviable status, he was a very devoted and loyal student of Hazrat Hammad, who was his first mentor. As long as the master lived, he remained in the service of Hazrat Hammad alone, learned from him, taught others under his guidance and always owed his patronage. How noble, able and hard-working student was Abu

Haneefa! Really such students are always rewarded with greatness.

Students who work hard, respect their teachers and are judicious would attain recognition and greatness later in life. In contrast such students who do not work hard, do not regard their mentors, are not devoted towards studies and who do not utilise the sagacity bestowed by Allah, would never be blessed with prosperity. Such students would become dull and dunce and would never learn anything. The life pattern of Abu Haneefa serves as the best example for the first type of students.

In 120 A.H. Hazrat Hammad, the mentor and guide of Imam Abu Haneefa passed away. The residents of Kufa and the students of the late mentor all collectively chose Imam Abu Haneefa as the successor. Abu Haneefa accepted the honour and served the institution so devotedly and selflessly that students thronged in thousands at the institution for receiving instructions from him. Nearly 800 students of Imam Abu Haneefa passed out of the institution as most capable and eminent scholars. Of them fifty were appointed as judges by the respective Abbasi rulers. One prominent student, Abu Yusuf, was elevated to the post of chief justice, Haroon Rasheed, the most powerful ruler of the time, would stand in reverence whenever Abu Yusuf visited the court.

Respecting Mother

Imam Abu Haneefa had attained enviable supremacy as a religious leader, teacher and scholar. He had several factories of spinning cloth and was the owner of a business concern also. Allah had blessed his business with prosperity. He was not at all dependent on anyone else. Still he was neither proud nor arrogant. He respected everyone – be they great or humble. His mother survived quite long after he attained the status of the most renowned scholar and the highest post of Imam. He served the mother himself, although many

attendants were present. He would present himself as a very humble child and say: "Mother dear, No'man is in your presence." And he would not take leave until and unless the mother granted him leave. He never disobeyed her. A very interesting anecdote is found in the reference literature.

There were many scholars in Kufa at that time. One of them was Amr Bin Warqa. Imam Abu Haneef's mother acknowledged him as a great scholar. Whenever she wanted a solution to any problem she would call Abu Haneefa and would say: "No'man, go and get the solution for this problem from Amr Bin Warqa." Imam would immediately run to Hazrat Amr to get the solution.

Hazrat Amr Bin Warqa would blush and would say: "How can I give my opinion when you are there!"

Imam would reply: "It is my mother's order that I should get the solution from you alone."

On some occasions, even Hazrat Amr Bin Warqa would not know the solution. In such cases he would seek the solution from Abu Haneefa and then would convey it through the son. This is how the son obeyed the mother. The son never thought that he was far more knowledgeable and should himself offer solution to his mother's problems! More interesting and salutary is the incident when the mother asked the son himself for a solution in a particular matter.

Imam presented a solution but the mother remarked: "I can't make out anything from what you are saying. Come on, let us go to Ibn Warqa."

Imam accompanied the mother to Amr Bin Warqa and the mother presented the problem. Ibn Warqa offered the same solution as given by Imam Saheb. The mother was satisfied but the son did not even said that it was the same solution that he had presented. This indicates how implicitly the Imam followed the Qur'anic injunction that you should not even say "Fie" to your parents. It also indicates that Imam was never vain and boastful.

Generosity

Allah, the Beneficent, had blessed Abu Haneefa with both scholarship and wealth. He was very lavish in sharing both these Divine possessions with the needy. Thousands of students enrolled with him at the institution. Religious knowledge and instructions were imparted to them without charging any fee. The poor students were looked after more devotedly. They were awarded scholarships liberally. Many such poor scholars maintained their families with this amount.

Abu Yusuf was a brilliant and intelligent student. His family could meet both ends with the assistance provided by Imam Saheb. Abu Yusuf turned out to be a great scholar of his times who was elevated to the post of Qazi (judge) of the whole nation. Imam Abu Haneefa wanted to spread religious knowledge far and wide.

He was equally generous and liberal with others too. People freely borrowed money from him. If the borrowers could not return the amount, he would exempt them from payment.

He would tell his acquaintances: "Well, express freely your need."

Then he would extend the helping hand liberally saying: "Praise Allah and thank Him for it is He who has blessed me with affluence only to share the riches with you all."

Once Imam, on his way to visit a sick person, observed a person slinking away on seeing him. He called him and asked him the reason for sneaking.

He admitted: "I owe you ten thousand. I have not yet paid it. I feel ashamed to face you."

Imam smiled and said: "I exempt you from payment."

Once he came to know that a renowned scholar was in debt and had shut himself in the house for he was not able to repay it. Imam immediately sent him the amount for returning the loan.

Once he observed two persons engaged in a squabble. He approached them and asked what the matter was.

One of them said: "He is not repaying my debt."

Imam Saheb took out the amount and paying it to the claimant remarked: "Muslims do not fight among themselves!"

Innumerable such incidents might be quoted. Here is how he earned the money.

Business

Imam Saheb earned every paisa through only permissible means. He had factories to spin fabric. His products had a very wide market. He had a store in the town also to sell them. A Hadith reads: "If there is a flaw in the merchandise, make the purchaser aware of it. Do not cover the defect."

Imam Saheb had issued strict instructions to all his salesmen to adhere to this Hadith. Once one of his salesmen Ibn Abdur Rehman had to go out of town for delivering the goods. Inadvertently he carried the defective product and could discover it only after his return. He informed about it to Imam Saheb who immediately gave away the huge amount of thirty five thousand in charity. More impelling is the incident where a lady came to his store to sell a piece of cloth. He was at the counter.

He asked her: "What is the value of your cloth?"

She said: "My selling price is one hundred!"

He examined the cloth and remarked: "What you are quoting is very little!"

The lady thought he was making fun. Looking at him intently she replied: "Then you give me what it is worth."

He handed over five hundred to her. The lady was puzzled. She smiled and departed. Have you at any time come across such a shopkeeper?!

Neighbour

Here is another interesting episode. A wrestler resided in the neighborhood of Imam Abu Haneefa. He was a very rude person. He was fond of singing. He practised it during the calm hours of night creating nuisance to neighbors. Even Imam Saheb could not enjoy sleep. Repeated persuasions from the neighboring people not to indulge in disturbing others did not bring any result. He was quite conscious of his strength and never cared for any advice.

Once when he was involved in a squabble police arrested and put him into prison. When Imam Saheb learnt about it, he immediately approached the Qazi and pleaded: "This wrestler is my neighbour. As a neighbour I have a right to help him while he is in distress. If the wrestler could be freed against penalty, I am ready to pay the amount."

The Qazi replied: "Do you want to free the person who takes away sleep from you?"

Imam Saheb said: "Yes, I have come to free him since the holy Prophet (pbuh) has asserted to be considerate towards neighbours."

The wrestler was released. This act of benevolence impressed the wrestler very much. He gave up singing, became a student of Imam Saheb and turned out to be a great scholar.

Compilation of Hanafi Fiqh

A Qazi of Kufa had concluded his day's duties at the court and was returning home. On the way he saw a woman quarreling with someone. She was using abusive language. The Qazi stopped at the scene, ordered for arresting and producing the woman instantaneously in the court. He too returned to the court and ordered to whip the woman.

When Imam Abu Haneefa heard about the incident, he said: Qazi has committed a wrong. A Qazi is not allowed to file a case in

his own court and pass judgement himself. According to the procedure a person other than the Qazi should file the suit and Qazi should sit on judgement over it.

Many more procedural mistakes of Qazis were observed by Imam Saheb. There was no reference manual guiding them to pass the verdicts in the light of Qur'an and Hadith. That was the cause for mistaken verdicts in some instances. Imam Saheb thought that one such reference book must be available to help Qazis take right and just decisions. He expressed the need before his students among whom were many learned scholars of the Qur'an and the Hadith. They all agreed to the proposal. Imam Saheb selected some from among his learned students. All of them would sit together to suggest solutions for various problems in the light of the Qur'an and the Hadith. Imam Saheb would listen to every individual opinion and give his own opinion. Then the final verdicts were dictated categorically as Farz (obligatory), Wajib (mandatory) or Sunnah (Tradition of the Prophet), Permissible or Forbidden.

Of course the beginning had already been made. Men used to approach him for decrees in case of their problems right from the early days. He had solved many such problems and issued decrees. They were all recorded. These records were taken out and the individual problems were all compiled together under different headings. Along with them, the other topics included were Faith, Hajj, Charity, Marriage, Transactions, Feuds, Spending, Living, Governing and about all other features and things that life encounters. In every case the Qur'an and the Hadith were compulsory sources of reference and separate volumes were prepared on different topics.

First four volumes comprise all these problems. These were our first books on Fiqh and Shariah. They were bought like hot cakes. Qazis started consulting these volumes freely and frequently and passed judgments in accordance with the solution laid down therein. This certainly was monumental work and was the first of its kind.

This is the greatest favour on the whole of Islamic World of Imam Abu Haneefa and his worthy disciples. Muslims are grateful to Allah and pay homage to Imam Saheb and his co-workers for providing such authoritative and useful books. This entitles him to be referred as Imam-e-Azam meaning the great leader.

Dealing with Rulers and Kings

Hazrat Imam Abu Haneefa was a very learned and renowned authority on Fiqh or jurisprudence. He acted in strict accordance with Qur'anic and Hadith principles. He only obeyed the Divine laws and followed the guidelines of the Prophet (pbuh). He did not heed the orders of any ruler or king, no matter how great he might have been, if he contravene the Divine laws. The rulers and the kings of Imam's times could not entice him to sing their song either through rich offerings or by threats. Imam Saheb did not take the rulers and kings of his times as legitimate rulers and kings. He believed in the only true ruler namely Allah. He further believed in men to be servants of God and his vicegerents in this universe. Vicegerency involves obeying all commandments of the chief (Allah) and exerting to make others also obey them. For making others to follow the true path of Allah believers choose from among the masses one who believes in and follows the commandments of Allah and then entrusts the entire duty of commanding to such an individual. Islam takes such a rightful man as the true vicegerent of Allah on the earth.

This was also the criteria set aside for deciding the true vicegerent by persons like Imam Abu Haneefa.

Well, during the times of Imam Abu Haneefa there were men who had adorned the throne by virtue of spending money. Such rulers usually nominated their own men as governors and subedars of different areas and ruled as they liked. They never bothered about following the Divine path. They were after establishing their own supremacy so that their sovereignty was not questioned. Anyone

going against the ruler would be punished severely.

These kings would entice the higher officials of their administration by having a group of sycophant around them. This would help them rule peacefully. There would be none to raise finger or voice from the general public, as the common men would only tread behind the trend-setters.

Usually religious scholars have holds over the common people. They are the influencing force. So kings hook them by either offering posts or other baits or forcing them to be under their thumb. Imprudent and shallow scholars yield to the temptations and readily give in. But those who do not succumb to the demands of the king are either eliminated or imprisoned.

Imam Abu Haneefa had to encounter such kings and rulers. The governor of Iraq, Ibne-e-Hubairah, topped the list. The citizens of Iraq had turned against him. So he decided to gain the goodwill and support of the religious leaders and scholars. He thought if those pious persons parroted him, general public would not oppose him. He invited several great scholars and offered them high posts. Many of them yielded and became his supporters. Then he invited Hazrat Abu Haneefa and said: "I shall hand over to you my seal. Your command will only be carried out. Even if my orders cross your will, do not put the seal. Only that money will be taken out from the treasury for which your approval is got. You have to be present in my court."

Imam Saheb declined flatly either to be present in his court or to accept the assigned responsibilities. The governor was agitated and threatened to imprison him and to order whipping. But Imam Saheb did not budge at all. Ibn Hubairah threw another charm.

He said: "Does not matter if you do not like to remain here. I will make you Qazi of the place you reside in. Do accept the appointment."

Imam Saheb refused this offer too. Enraged, Ibn Hurairah vowed: "If Imam does not accede, I shall get him whipped."

Imam Saheb in turn vowed: "It is easier for me to withstand the lashes but I cannot earn displeasure of Allah on the Doomsday and it is not possible to bear the punishment there. I will not accept his proposals even at the cost of my life."

Ibn Hubairah ordered to lash the Imam. He was whipped at the head thirty times and then put into jail. He further commanded that Imam should be lashed ten times every day till he accepted the offer. He was thrashed ten times every day. His skin cracked but he did not reconsider his stance. When people came to know of this atrocity, some courtiers warned the governor that if Imam Saheb dies in the jail, it would be disastrous.

Ibn Hubairah also feared that in such an event, people would revolt.

He said: "Is there no one who could convince Imam to seek respite from me."

When some persons approached the Imam with the suggestion of the governor, he replied: "Let me think a little about it."

The governor took this as seeking time and freed Abu Haneefa. Out of the prison Imam Saheb proceeded to Makkah. The citizens soon revolted and there were neither the governor nor the ruler who had made him subedar of the province.

Imam and Caliph Mansoor

Those who usurped the throne as kings during the times of Imam Abu Haneefa wanted to be termed as Caliphs. This was sheer high-handedness. If someone did not accept them as the Caliph, they would try to convince him through money, post or any other favour. One such ruler was a great king called Mansoor. He wanted to be recognised as a Caliph.

Mansoor had heard of Imam Abu Haneefa. He had also learnt that the Fiqh of Imam Saheb was prevalent in the whole country and people decide their transactions, marriages and all other activities in accordance with the decrees laid down in his Fiqh manuals. He thought that he should keep Imam Saheb in good humour and pleased. So he sent costly gifts as well as lakhs of hard cash to the Imam. But Imam Abu Haneefa returned everything and declined to accept anything in future also.

The Caliph enquired: "Why don't you accept my gifts?"

Imam Saheb replied: "Did you send any presentation from your own assets? You have only utilised the money of *Baitul Maal* (Islamic treasury), which belongs to all Muslims. Further how can I accept a gift from this treasury when I have not participated in any Jihad? Neither am I the son of a soldier who had participated in Jihad. Nor am I a beggar who shall accept the gifts."

Mansoor had to keep mum. The courtiers told Mansoor that the Imam did not recognise him as a true Caliph at all. Hearing this, he again sent for the Imam. When Imam appeared in the court, Caliph asked:

"Aren't I a true Caliph?"

Without any fear or hesitation, Imam Saheb replied: "The real and the true Caliph would be the one who is chosen by all Muslims and one who administers the Islamic State in strict accordance with Islamic Fiqh."

Mansoor had asked this question in the open court. People thought that the answer would bring the wrath upon the Imam and he would be executed. But Caliph Mansoor was very shrewd. He acted as if he had not heard him. He made the Imam leave the court. He ordered his minister Rabi' to follow the Imam. He handed over a purse and asked the minister to offer it to Imam Saheb. If he accepted the purse, he should be beheaded then and there. If he did not accept

it, Rabi' had to come back without harming the Imam. Rabi' reached the Imam on the way and offered him the purse. Imam returned the purse saying:

"I do not consider the amount in the purse permissible even for Mansoor. How can I take it myself? I will not accept this amount even if I were to loose my life!"

Rabi' returned unsuccessful.

Now Mansoor tried to trap the Imam in another way.

He invited the Imam to the court and said: "I am appointing you the Chief Justice of all the states. Please accept the offer."

Imam replied: "I am not fit for this high post."

Mansoor retorted: "What? You are a liar. You are certainly the greatest scholar."

As soon as Mansoor uttered "liar", Imam Saheb immediately said: "When I am a liar in your view, how can you appoint a liar as judge?"

Mansoor kept quiet but after some time offered the post of the Qazi.

Imam Saheb declined saying: "For you, the Qazi who passes verdicts according to your liking is the best. I pass judgements in accordance with the commandments of Allah and His Messenger. I cannot decide according to your wishes even if you drown me in Euphrates."

The tables were turned. Mansoor became a mortal enemy of Hazrat Imam Abu Haneefa. The grandson of Hazrat Imam Husain, Hazrat Zaid claimed the caliphate against Mansoor. Hazrat Zaid was a very noble and God-fearing person. He had a thorough knowledge of Qur'an and Hadith. When he claimed the caliphate, many noble Muslims became his supporters. Among those who stood by him was Imam Abu Haneefa also.

Mansoor was put in tight corners by this claim. He sent an army to arrest Hazrat Zaid. Heavy battle took place. Harath Zaid was killed and Mansoor came out victorious. News reached him that Abu Haneefa was also a supporter of Hazrat Zaid. Soon another person of the same family Muhammad Bin Abdullah and his brother Ibrahim Bin Abdullah appeared on the scene. They also claimed the caliphate. They were also very learned and scholarly personalities. In support of these claimants Abu Haneefa performed a heroic deed.

Hassan was a great general of Caliph Mansoor. He was a devotee of Imam Saheb and visited Imam Saheb often. Mansoor assigned Hassan to lead the encounter against these claimants. Hassan sought the advice of Imam Saheb. Imam forbade him from proceeding on this mission. He went to Caliph Mansoor and excused himself from taking up this mission.

Calmly Mansoor replaced Hassan by another general. Then he tried to ascertain from the courtiers the reason for Hassan's decision. They informed him that he frequently visited Imam Abu Haneefa.

Mansoor realised that Imam Saheb alone has come in the way. Then he turned hostile, called him to the court and asked him to take up the post of Qazi. Again Imam Saheb declined. Wild with anger, Mansoor ordered to whip Imam Saheb. The news reached the ears of Abdus Samad, the uncle of Mansoor. He rushed to the caliph. By that time Imam Saheb had already received thirty deadly lashes, and he was bleeding profusely.

The uncle told the caliph: "What have you done. He is the greatest jurist of Iraq. Take it, you have a lakh of swords pointing towards you."

What Abdus Samad meant was that when Iraqis would come to know that Mansoor has punished Imam Saheb, they would revolt to take revenge. Mansoor got terrified. He immediately sent a purse of 30,000 against 30 lashes. Imam Saheb as usual did not accept the

money saying: "Mansoor does not possess permissible earnings. How can I accept his gift?"

Although Mansoor freed the Imam on the advice of his uncle, he again invited Imam Saheb to his court and insisted that he accepts the offer. Imam Saheb declined. Mansoor put him into prison and after a few days he got Imam Saheb poisoned. The poison took the life of Imam Abu Haneefa in 150 A.H. When he became sure that he was dying, he instructed people thus: "After I breathe my last, do not bury me in Baghdad, a place which has been snatched or acquired by unlawful means by Mansoor."

And thus ended the memorable story of a heroic scholar, who did not succumb to the atrocious demands of an oppressive king. Let Allah fill the Imam Saheb's grave with Divine light and bless his soul. O Allah! grant us will and strength to tread the path of Imam Abu Haneefa consistently. Amen.



Lesson 2

Imam Malik (R.A.)¹

Like Imam Abu Haneefa, Imam Malik was also a very great jurist. He was from Madina. He was the son of Hazrat Anas Bin Malik, who was a close companion of the last Prophet (pbuh) of Allah. He was born in 93 A.H. and died on 11th of Rabiul Awwal in 179 A.H. His compilation of Fiqh called *Muwatta* is a very popular volume. Millions of Muslims lead their life seeking solutions to their problems from it. Even emperor Haroon Rasheed visited Imam Malik at Madina when he went to Makkah for performing Hajj. He listened to *Muwatta* from the Imam. So he might be regarded as a student of the Imam.

Do you know how Imam Malik attained this high status of a great scholar? He was the son of a great companion of the Prophet, Hazrat Anas. All the companions had obtained the knowledge of the Faith directly from the Prophet himself and they had observed his activities and actions closely and tried to emulate him in their lives. Hazrat Anas was in the company of the Prophet from his childhood. So he followed the beloved Prophet in all his actions and taught his family members in the same manner as the great Prophet taught him.

Of course there were attempts on the part of the father. But the very fact that Imam Malik was born in such a house was the blessing of Allah. Added to this, Imam was also blessed with such intelligence and wisdom that he could understand and learn things easily. He was hard-working and had great attachment to studies. Besides his father, he approached great scholars and learned persons present at Madina and learnt from them. Some of his teachers and guides were Imam Zuhri (R.A.), Imam Yahya (R.A.), Hazrat Nafa'i (R.A.),

¹ Rahmatullah Alaih

Muhammad Bin Munkadar, Hashsham Bin Urwah, Zaid Bin Aslam and Hazrat Rabee'a Bin Abdur Rahman (R.A.). All these scholars were giants in the field of religious knowledge and science.

Imam Malik used to memorise all Ahadis (Traditions) as he listened to them from the various teachers. However he would note down them separately. He was already a proficient scholar in Qur'anic knowledge and now by collecting Traditions he became equally accomplished in Hadith. Using the knowledge of both the Qur'an and the Hadith he compiled solutions of many simple and complicated problems that would arise in day-to-day life. This compilation constitutes his famous treatise called *Muwatta*.

He lived at Madina. Although he travelled to seek and propagate the knowledge of Islam. He was mostly seen to conduct his discourses from Masjid-e-Nabavi in Madina. He had chosen a corner in the mosque. After the morning prayer, he would wait till the sun come up brightly. Then he would occupy his appointed place. People would gather around him to seek clarifications for their problems in the light of Qur'an and Hadith. This practice continued till his last. Thousands of seekers after truth quenched their thirst in this institution. Among them were persons who came travelling long distances.

Andalus or Spain was a country hundreds of miles away in the north-west in a different continent. Hazrat Yahya came all the way from this place. He stayed at Madina and took instructions in religion from Imam Malik. When Hazrat Yahya returned to Spain after completing his studies, the ruler of Spain acknowledged his erudition. Imam Yahya spread the knowledge of the glorious Qur'an and Hadith far and wide in Spain. In addition to Imam Yahya the other noted student of Imam Malik was Imam Shafa'i.

His institution at the mosque was both an educational centre and a training camp. Students would excel in manners, punctuality and etiquette. Haroon Rasheed attended the classes and was very

impressed by his teachings. He presented gifts and a large purse. He suggested that Imam should accompany him to Baghdad and spread knowledge from there all around. But Imam Saheb loved to reside in the city of the Prophet (pbuh) and thereby never left it. Further, he believed that once in the service of a king he had to keep in mind the requirements of the court always. So he did not accept the invitation. He said: "I cannot go to any place leaving the city of the Prophet (pbuh). You are free to take back your presents and the money."

Haroon Raheed tried another device. "People are following the Hanafi Fiqh in the country. If you desire I shall terminate it and issue orders only to follow your Muwatta."

Imam Malik was quite unselfish and liberal in his attitude and behaviour. He was not at all jealous of other scholars. If he wanted he would have got his school of Fiqh prevail in the country.

But he replied: "I am not the only person knowledgeable in Hadith. There are innumerable men who adore and admire the Traditions of the beloved Prophet (pbuh). The Hanafi Fiqh should be allowed to be followed in all places where it is already in practice."

How noble and good was Imam Malik. Just pause, think and compare with the present day scholars. They are jealous of others and want that people should accept only what they suggest. They should realise what is greatness. Imam Malik is the best example for them. They should emulate him.

Once the Caliph approached him for a decree. He issued one in complete consonance with the Qur'anic and Hadith tenets and principles. The Caliph suggested that he should amend and issue a decree as the Caliph wanted. Imam Malik refused to issue any decree that goes against the Qur'anic principles and never issued one that was desired by the Caliph. The Caliph kept quiet at that moment. But he got Imam Malik's arms chopped off by his soldiers. This was

horrible. But Imam Saheb never cared for this agony. He also endured bravely the torture of imprisonment.

Imam Malik lived to be 85 years old. He spent his whole life propagating the religion of Allah. He used to get valuable presents and sums of money from his students and the kings of the times. Since the Prophet (pbuh) had advocated acceptance of presents irrespective of their value, Imam Malik accepted all gifts received every day. He would utilise them to maintain his own family and spent much more on others. He even donated to those who came to study from outstations. When Hazrat Yahya came from Spain he gave him so much that he became quite rich and left for Spain as an affluent person. Similarly he awarded lakhs of dinars to Imam Shafa'ii. You can read about his philanthropy in the life history of Imam Shafa'ii.



Lesson 3

Imam Shafaii (R.A.)¹

Hazrat Sayeb (R.A.)² was a respectable companion of our beloved Prophet (pbuh). His son Shafe'a was a renowned person. His grandson was Idrees who was the father of Hazrat Imam Shafaii.

The real name of Imam Shafaii was Muhammad but he became known as Shafaii because of his great grandfather. And now very few people know him by his real name. A great jurist and founder of another school of Fiqh, has a following of millions of Muslims today.

He belonged to a highly respected family of Makkah. He was born at Makkah in 50 A.H. It was the month of Rajab and the date was 15. It was the very date when another great jurist Imam Abu Haneefa breathed his last. Allah took away one great jurist on that day and date; and in the same year on the very same date was born another great Imam of Fiqh.

The parents of Imam Shafaii were very religious and true Muslims. As soon as their son started speaking, they started making him read the holy Qur'an. He was still a child when he memorised the whole of the Qur'an and became a Hafiz. People called him a child prodigy and predicted that he would become a very learned man. All this was considered the benediction of Allah, for Allah knows whom to bless with honour.

When he became Hafiz, the parents sent him to Hazeel. Hazeel was a small town near Makkah. The residents of the place were known for their chaste and pure articulation. The parents wanted their son to learn the art of using chaste Arabic. He remained at the town for two to three years. On reaching to Makkah he enrolled himself with great scholars. In the meantime, his father passed away. The mother

¹Rahmatullah Alaih

²Raziullahu ta'ala Anhu

became the chief guardian. She was keen to get her son educated at the best of institutions from great and renowned followers of Islam. She encouraged him to learn more from the stalwarts in the field. She also prayed for Divine support and guidance in this direction. His desire for learning reached to its zenith in his 14th year alone and he longed to go out of Makkah in search of great and able teachers.

At last he sought permission from her mother to go. She became sad. Imam was a very noble son.

Seeing the sad mood of the mother he said: "Mother! In case you do not like to permit me, I shall be in your service alone."

It was the turn of the mother to get upset.

She consoled: "My son, I am not sad for your seeking permission. In fact I was praying day in and day out that you should get educated from great scholars. I am sad because even if I wish I could not provide you even two loaf of bread for consumption on your way to seeking of knowledge."

She cried, but controlling herself she said: "Dear son, do not worry. The One whose faith and religion you are going to acquire will Himself provide you means. He is the One who arranges for our everyday living and provides succour and subsistence from sources beyond our comprehension."

What a valuable advice did the mother offer! Certainly she was a gracious mother! She took out two sheets of cloth, handed them to her son and said:

"You were, my boy, a trust from Allah, with me. I entrust you to Him alone now. And in good faith I believe that He will protect you always and everywhere! No harm or injury will befall you."

She clasped him to her and prayed:

"O my Sustainer! I am sending my most dear son in your path to gain knowledge of your creed, the religion that your beloved

Prophet (pbuh) has brought to us. O my Cherisher, You, who have acceded to my implorations of creating urges in him for learning more of religion, now fulfil his desires, help him and make him a great scholar during my lifetime alone so that I praise and offer gratitudes to you more and more."

She patted her son and said:

"Go my dear son, I entrust you to Allah. Khuda Hafiz!"

The fourteen years old boy now set on his travel to Madina from Makkah alone. As he tread the path he prayed: "How I wish I accompany a caravan!" And lo! How he was helped by Gracious Allah. As he had reached up to Zee Tuwa, a nearby town, he witnessed a caravan in the town. It was bound to Madina. Imam Saheb approached the camp and offered salutation. An elderly nobleman noticed him, beckoned him and said:

"Dear boy, I wish you join for lunch with me."

Imam Saheb accepted the invitation. He was taught by his parents to eat with three fingers. He started eating in his usual manner. The elderly person and others were eating using all the five fingers. Thinking that he should not be taken as an alien, Imam Saheb also started using all his fingers. The elderly person observed this and also that he was picking up food from front of the plate. After finishing food, he prayed: Alhamdulillahil lazi At'amna wa saqana wa Ja'alana Minal Muslimeen (Praise be to Allah who provided us food and drink and made us borne among Muslims).

After this supplication, he thanked the elderly person and prayed for his welfare too. The elderly gentleman was observing the boy intensly. He made the boy sit by his side and started talking.

Elderly person: "It appears, you reside in Makkah Mo'azzama".

Imam Saheb: "Yes, Sir, I belong to the city of Makkah." "If I am correct, you belong to Quraish dynasty?" He asked.

The boy replied: "Yes Sir, I belong to Quraish clan. You are

correct. But can you tell me who told you all this? Allah alone is All-knowing, isn't He?"

"It is not difficult to know, my boy. I have travelled far and wide, lived in cities and towns, met scholars and nomads. Observing your behaviour and listening to you I could make out that you are a cityboy and from Quraish dynasty since Quraish are known for their etiquette. They are known for their hospitality and they do not refuse when invited for sharing food. You also did not decline." The elderly person told: Imam Saheb. "O.K. Sir, may I please know your native place?"

E.P.: "I am from Madina, the city of our beloved Prophet, Muhammad (pbuh)."

I.S.: "Will you kindly tell me who is the most eminent scholar at Madina at present?"

E.P.: "At present the most celebrated scholar at Madina is Hazrat Imam Malik. Let Allah bless him with more respect."

I.S.: "Ameen! Let Allah accept your prayer and mine too."

E.P.: "So you are going to Madina for getting educated in religion, Aren't you?"

I.S.: "Yes Sir, I do desire so and pray for it too!"

E.P.: "I had understood that you have come out of the house for seeking knowledge alone. You seem to be very eager to get educated. Then listen, your prayer has already reached the ears of Allah. You are going to seek knowledge, so you are the guest of Allah. It becomes obligatory for us to help you. Yonder stands the best camel loaded with baggage. That's for you. We will take you to Madina."

These were glad tidings. Imam Saheb offered thanks inwardly. He rode the camel meant for him and as the caravan plodded towards Madina he recited the glorious Qur'an all the way. He could complete one full text of the holy Book during day-time and one during the night. He admitted that he could recite the whole Qur'an sixteen

times by the time he reached Madina.

Imam Saheb loved implicitly the beloved Prophet (pbuh) right from his childhood. He loved the city of the Prophet (pbuh) too. As caravan marched ahead, he wished to reach Madina as quickly as possible. The caravan reached Yathrib, the city of the Prophet, on the eighth day. Imam Saheb was highly delighted. It was time for Asr (afternoon) prayer. He directly reached Masjid-e-Nabavi. The congregation prayer had just been offered. So he prayed individually. He saw that at a distance an adorable person was seated. His face was glittering with brilliance. People were gathering around him. The young stranger also joined them. The revered person was clad in two sheets of cloth — one tied around his waist and the other covered his upper body. Imam Shafaii could understand that this personality is no one other than Imam Malik (R.A.). When Imam Malik started a discourse in Hadith his guess turned into certainty. Imam Malik started narrating the Tradition as follows:

“To me Nafe and Nafe to Abdullah Ibn Umar quoted that to me the person resting in the grave, and so saying Imam Malik pointed with his right hand towards the tomb of the Prophet (pbuh), and then narrated the whole Tradition.”

Imam Shafaii reported that this method of narrating the Hadith by Imam Malik (R.A.) overawed him. The usual method for quoting the Hadith adopted by Imam Malik was to just give references of narrators finally referring to the beloved Prophet Muhammad at which instance he would point with his right hand to the tomb of the great Prophet and described the text of the Tradition.

The listeners would note down the Hadith. Imam Shafaii had neither pen nor inkpot. He picked up a straw, moistened it in the mouth and wrote down the Hadith on the other palm. He was so engrossed in the act that he became indifferent to the environment. Imam Malik was observing this peculiar action and was getting irritated. After narrating 25 Traditions Imam Malik concluded his

discourse. People got up and left the place. Imam Malik continued to sit. Where could Imam Shafaii go? He had neither his own house nor any relation or any one else known to him. He also sat there alone. When all the people had gone, Imam Malik gestured towards him to come nearer. Imam Shafaii went closer and very reverentially took his seat in front of Imam Malik. Looking intently at him for a few minutes, he asked: "Are you from Haram (Ka'aba)?" Imam Shafaii replied: "Yes Sir, I hail from Makkah Mo'azamma."

Imam Malik said: "I am seeing many good qualities in you. You are very well-behaved. Your diction is also quite eloquent. You seem to be educated. But what you have done now is a dirty practice."

Imam Shafaii was taken aback. He enquired: "Please sir, tell me what dirty practice have I committed now?"

Imam Malik told: "When I was delivering discourse on Hadith you were playing with a straw like a child."

Imam Shafaii realised the reference. He respectfully explained: "Sir, I was not playing. I did not have a pen or ink, I was writing the Traditions on my palm."

"Let me see" and Imam Mâlik drew Imam Shafaii's hand towards him, looked at the palm and remarked: "There is nothing here!"

Imam Shafaii said: "Sir, this was only a pretext to memorise the Hadith. How can letters be written on the palm in the absence of ink and pen? However what all you have narrated has been written on my heart. If you desire, I shall repeat."

Imam Malik was surprised. He said: "Alright, let me hear."

And Imam Shafaii repeated all the 25 Traditions as were narrated by Imam Malik gesturing in the same manner towards the holy tomb of the great Prophet (pbuh) as did Imam Malik.

Imam Malik was thrilled and praised God for having bestowed such a unique memorising power upon the young boy.

It was time for Maghrib (evening prayer). After the prayer, Imam

Malik asked his attendant: "Take your master to the house," and pointed towards Imam Shafaii. The attendant led Imam Shafaii to the residence of Imam Malik, made him stay in a room and apprised him of Qibla, sleeping place, bath room, etc.

The attendant was still explaining when Imam Malik entered the room accompanied by a servant who carried the food tray. Imam Malik took the tray from the servant, placed it on the ground and saluted Imam Shafaii affectionately. He then asked the servant to elevate the hands. The servant took the basin and went to cause to wash the guest's hand when Imam Malik interrupted the servant and instructed that before partaking of food the host's hands are to be cleaned first and after partaking food those of the guests.

Imam Shafaii said this was a novel information for him. He liked it and then asked the reason for it. "The thing is", Imam Malik explained, "it is the host who invites the guest, so he must reach the table first so that he can arrange the dishes properly. And the host should get his hands cleaned last because it might be possible that someone might arrive then and he had to play the host for the newcomer."

After the dinner Imam Malik enquired about the well-being of Makkans and others. After a long conversation, he remarked: "You must be tired after the long travel. Now go to sleep." He retired to his chambers and Imam Shafaii slept quite comfortably.

Early morning Imam Malik himself awakened Imam Shafaii, who saw Imam Malik standing at the service of the guest with a pot of water. Abashed, Imam Shafaii could not stir to receive the water pot. Realising the delicate situation Imam Malik said: "Brother, there is nothing to be ashamed of. You are my guest and the Prophet (pbuh) has ordained to serve the guest. And there is something special with you. You are on the move to learn about religion. You are the guest of both Allah and His Messenger."

Being consoled and encouraged Imam Shafaii took the pot and

prepared to leave for morning prayer at Masjid-e-Nabavi. Reaching the mosque he offered the Sunnah Rakaats and waited for the mass prayer. Imam Malik led the Farz prayer. After the prayer he did not stir from the place and engaged himself in meditative recitation. When the sun came up a little across the sky, he took his seat of discourse. People thronged around him. Imam Malik took out his book of Fiqh, *Muwatta*, handed it over to Imam Shafaii and asked him to read it for all. Imam Shafaii obeyed and people started to note down the Traditions. This was the routine for full eight months, in which period Imam Shafaii completed the reading of *Muwatta*. By this time, the whole of the book was memorised fully dot to dot and word to word by Imam Shafaii.

Imam Malik played host to Imam Shafaii for this whole period of eight months spent, and treated him in such a way that people started to take Imam Shafaii as a family member of Imam Malik. During the stay Imam Shafaii enjoyed the Haj season also. Some Haj pilgrims from Egypt arrived at Madina and wanted to listen to *Muwatta*. Imam Malik assigned the responsibility to Imam Shafaii, who recited *Muwatta* completely word for word from memory. The Iraqis arrived after the Egyptians left. Among them Imam Shafaii saw a youth who was clean and sophisticated. He was offering the prayer in a very orderly way. When he finished the prayer, Imam Shafaii approached him and asked:

“Where are you from, brother?”

“I am from Iraq”, he replied.

“In Which town of Iraq do you reside?” Imam asked.

As soon as he said “Kufa”, the name of Imam Abu Haneefa (R.A.) flashed in the mind of Imam Shafaii.

He suddenly enquired: “Oh brother! will you please tell me who is the most able and reputed religious scholar in Kufa these days.”

The young man replied: “Imam Abu Yusuf and Imam

Muhammad Bin Hasan are the two great scholars. They are the illustrious descpiples of Imam Abu Haneefa.”

“Well, tell me when are you returning to Iraq.” Imam was impatient.

“We will start in the morning tomorrow,” He was informed.

Imam Shafaii ran to Imam Malik and said: “Sir, you know I have left my house for seeking more and more knowledge. I have learnt that there are some reputed scholars in Kufa also. The convoy from Iraq will be starting their return journey in the morning. If you pemit, I will accompany them.”

Impressed by the eagerness and yearning of his dear student, Imam Malik readily consented, complimented and wishing him good luck said: “Do proceed. Whoever takes a journey for seeking religious instructions, the angels spread their wings on the paths and the dividends of the effort always keep multiplying.”

Imam Malik made all the arrangements over night. He took his disciple to the caravan in the morning and hired a strong camel. Imam Shafaii was perplexed. When he sought permission his mentor did not possess a single pie. Neither there was anything with him. How could Imam Malik hire such a nice camel in fabulous terms? When Imam Shafaii appraoched him for clarification, Imam Malik narrated how Allah had blessed.

“You see, really I was not having anything with me when I talked to you. But when I was retiring I heard a tap on the door. I opened it. Abdur Rahman Bin Qasim was standing at the door. He carried a bag. He presented it and pressed me to accept it. When I opened the bag inside the house, I found one hundred dinars in it. I thanked Allah that He arranged your passage money. I have reserved 50 dinars for the house and the other 50 are for you to spend. Accept it and be thankful to Allah.”

Tears flowed down the cheeks of Imam Shafaii by this

benevolent gesture of Imam Malik. He accepted the boon. The camel man charged four dinars. He paid it to him. Imam Malik stayed and waited till the caravan disappeared. Twenty four days later Imam Shafaii reached Kufa. Again it was time for Asr (afternoon) prayer. Imam Shafaii reached the mosque for offering prayer. The mass prayer had concluded. A young man was praying there. Imam Shafaii observed that he was not offering the prayer properly. He interrogated the young man and advised him to be composed and discreet in saying the prayer. The young man was enraged and rushed out cursing the young Imam. At the door he came across Imam Abu Yusuf and Imam Muhammad Bin Hassan.

They asked him: "What's the matter?"

He replied: "For the last 15 years I have been offering the prayer with you. You never objected to me. And now look at that boy who is saying the prayer there. He asks me to perform the namaz properly. He looks like a Hejazi because people from Hejaz alone talk so fearlessly."

When the respected scholars heard the young man they looked at Imam Shafaii and realised that the Hejazi young boy seems to be quite learned. They advised the young man to go to the Hejazi boy and ask him the method of commencing the prayer. The young man approached Imam Shafaii and put up the question. Imam said that the prayer should begin with two Farz and one Sunnah (obligatory and Traditional requisites). On hearing this the two elderly scholars thought that the one inside must be a great scholar. They again sent the young man to Imam Saheb for a definition of these two Farz and one Sunnah.

Imam Shafaii elucidated them:

"The first of the two Farz is to express the intention for praying and the second is to pronounce "Takbeer-e-Tahreema" or the major or first pronouncement of Allah-o-Akbar. And the one Sunnah is to

raise the hands up to the ears after the major pronouncement.”

When this explanation reached the two scholars, they entered the mosque and found just a teenage boy. They looked at each other, sat aside and asked the young man to call the teenager to them. The young man asked Imam Shafaii to present himself before the scholars.

Imam Shafaii understood that he will be put to test. He too became tough. He sent word: “Go and tell that thirsty go to the well and not the well to the thirsty!”

The two further realised that the person knew how to talk. They went to Imam Shafaii and saluted him. To be embarrassed was now the turn of Imam Shafaii. He immediately got up, responded the salutation and came forward to shake hand. The two respected scholars sat down. Imam Shafaii followed them. They enquired about him. When they learnt that this teenager has memorised the whole of *Muwatta*, they posed a few problems before him and wanted to know the solution of *Muwatta* regarding them. When he answered correctly, they were very pleased. They called the attendant and asked him to take the teenager to the residence. The attendant led Imam Shafaii out of the mosque and found a decorated mule waiting at the door of the mosque. The attendant helped Imam to ride the mule. Imam was embarrassed again. Clad in old clothes to ride a well-decorated mule created a scene and people gazed at him with wide eyes all along the way. Imam Shafaii reached the bungalow of Imam Muhammad Bin Hassan. The attendant helped Imam to get off the mule. When he learnt that Imam Muhammad lives with such pomp, tears rolled down his cheeks. Imam Muhammad appeared at the scene and consoled Imam Shafaii saying:

“Do not be perturbed. I have this palatial building got constructed investing money earned through permissible means. And I am indebted to Allah that every year I offer its Zakat.”

Pacifying thus, Imam Muhammad took Imam Shafaii inside the

house and offered him a fine dress to wear. Imam Shafaii bathed and appeared clad in fine clothes. The elderly and the young Imams conversed on various topics. Imam Muhammad showed Imam Shafaii his books and allowed him to pick any book for perusal.

Imam Shafaii picked one book to browse through during the night. In the morning Imam Muhammad learnt that Imam Shafaii has memorised the whole book. He was wonderstruck and praised Allah that he has bestowed such an enviable memory upon the young Shafaii.

Imam Shafaii stayed at Imam Muhammad for quite a long period. He remembered his mother here and he sought permission of the host to visit her mother. Imam Muhammad placed before him half his assets and said that permission would be granted only when all these assets are accepted. Imam Shafaii replied: "Sir, I did not come out of my house for making money. My mother had accepted my separation so that I could get educated in religion, return as a scholar and devote myself to spread the Divine Faith. Further, what shall I do of this huge money?"

But Imam Muhammad was adamant.

He said: "This is nothing but a gift from an elder brother to his younger one. You have to go a long way. This will be useful on the way."

Imam Shafaii had to accept the money. He started his back journey. However as he reached cities, if he were to know some scholar or the other, he would reach him, stayed there and proceeded only after learning something from him. He grew to be 21 years old now.

Imam Shafaii reached Baghdad. Haroon Rasheed was the king there. Somehow the news had reached him that a youth was heading towards Baghdad who was a great scholar and belonged to the Quraish tribe. As soon as the Imam got into the doors of Baghdad, a

soldier stopped and asked him his name, his father's name and his lineage. Imam Shafaii gave him all the details. The soldier disappeared after noting down everything in his diary. Imam proceeded towards the Jamia Masjid and slept in a corner. It was midnight when the police raided the mosque. Persons in the mosque were taken aback. The soldiers threw light on every individual present in the mosque and checked. When the turn of Imam Shafaii came they declared: "We have found the one who is wanted. Do not panic."

Imam Shafaii was wondering why he was caught!

The soldiers said: "You have to go to the king."

He was presented before Haroon Rasheed who was adorning the throne in all his splendour. Imam Saheb did not fear. He went to him and saluted him: "As-salam-o-Alaikum." Haroon reciprocated the salutaion and seated Imam by his side and asked Imam Saheb's name, address, etc.

Imam Shafaii replied: "I am a native of Makkah. I belong to Quraish clan and am Hashimi."

Haroon Rasheed was also a Quraishi and Hashimi. He engaged Imam in conversation. Hearing Imam, Haroon was convinced of his erudition and said:

"I desire to appoint you as Qazi of this place. Please accept."

Imam Shafaii politely declined the offer. And thinking that the king wanted to have a hold on him and that he started devising means of freeing himself from the royal clutches.

Haroon Rasheed asked: "Doesn't matter, tell me if you have any other desire. I shall fulfil it."

Imam Saheb seized the opportunity : "I want to leave Baghdad as soon as possible."

Haroon Rasheed cried hearing this. Offering a purse of 1000 dinar, he pleaded:

"My practice is to bestow a gift on whosoever comes to me. Please accept this."

Imam accepted the royal gift, but when he came to the doors of the palace, the soldiers surrounded him and wanted to have their share. Imam asked them to call all their colleagues. When all the soldiers gathered, he distributed the money equally among them and retained his share. He took the road to Jamia Masjid and rested there till it was time for prayer. A young person led the prayers and he committed several mistakes. One for which *Sajda-e-Sahu* became obligatory. He did not offer it. Imam Saheb interrupted him and he repeated the whole prayer.

After the prayer, he asked the youth to get a pen and ink so that he could enlighten the youth with all the requisites for the prayer. Imam dictated all the requirements and problems with their solutions of prayer. Quite a volume could be compiled. The compilation was named as "Kitabuz Zaafraan" against the name of the young person.

Imam Shafaii stayed in Baghdad for three years. Haroon Rasheed convinced him somehow to accept the post of Tahsildar of Najran. But Imam did not continue and gave up the post soon. When people started for Haj pilgrimage he remembered Kufa, Imam Abu Yusuf and Imam Muhammad Bin Hassan. Then he remembered Imam Malik and his mother. Imam Shafaii sent his resignation letter to the king and joined the convoy to Hejaz. He learnt from a person in the caravan that Imam Malik has attained affluency and now resides with all splendour in a big palace. Imam Shafaii said to himself: "Oh, I see I must go and see for myself how Imam is devoted to Allah now."

On the way, a person recognised the Imam and presented a purse. Imam Saheb refused to accept. But he insisted so much that Imam Shafaii was compelled to keep it with him. The convoy reached Hiran on a Friday. Imam Saheb decided to have his head shaved and bathe since it is Sunnah. He went to a barber. The barber was halfway in shaving the head that an aristocrat came to the saloon. The barbar

left Imam Saheb and attended the aristocrat. Obviously Imam Saheb did not like this behaviour of the barber. He realised that fear and greed were the two influencing factors of the barber's behaviour. When the barber returned to resume the left-over job, Imam Saheb stopped him and rebuked him:

"For the sake of money, you have despised a common man. Never mind, take this money".

And he gave him plenty of money.

Some persons were observing the incident.

They told Imam Saheb: "What is this, sir? He has misbehaved with you and you are rewarding him with so much money. This is not wise."

The comments were not complete, that suddenly another nobleman arrived at the scene. He alighted from his mount, came rushing to Imam Saheb and embraced him.

"Who are you?" Imam Saheb demanded.

The nobleman replied: "Sir, I have recognised you, you are Imam Shafaii. Please come along with me."

And he took Imam Saheb to the Amir of the town. The Amir seated him paying due respects. The table was laid.

Imam Saheb said: "Unless you tell me how you recognised me, I am not going to share food with you."

The nobleman and the Amir told Imam Saheb: "Sir, when you wrote a book while at Baghdad and read it for the people of Baghdad, then we too had enrolled as your students."

He embraced them. Imam Saheb stayed at Hiran for three days.

The chief of the city suggested: "Sir, I have four towns under me and they are good source of income. It is my desire that you agree to take them over and reside here alone."

Imam Saheb refused to accept the offer. Thereupon the Amir

brought forty bags full of Dinars and placing them before Imam Saheb, pleaded to accept them.

There was no other go but to accept them.

Wonderful are the ways of Allah. One who despises riches, come across it without any effort. And the wealth runs away from the one who runs after it and even taints and humiliates the seeker.

Imam Saheb left Hiran. He gifted generously to any scholar whom he met on the way. He distributed so much among the poor and the needy that by the time he reached Ramla city, he was left with only ten Dinars. From here he proceeded to Madina to visit his mentor Imam Malik by hiring a ride. He reached Madina and went to Masjid-e-Nabavi. He offered the Asr (evening) prayer. Then he saw Imam Malik coming in all grandeur. Scholars were surrounding him. Four attendants were holding the extension of the robe. He entered and took a seat on a comfortable and fashionable chair. That day Imam Malik put forth a problem before the assembly. No one could answer. A person was sitting by the side of Imam Shafaii. Imam Shafaii told the solution to him and he got up and repeated the solution. Imam Malik said: "Very well, it is quite correct." And he asked pupils to note it down.

Imam Malik now posed a second problem. Imam Shafaii solved it through the same person. This solution was also correct. Now to whatever problem was posed by Imam Malik, Imam Shafaii would present the solution through the same person. Imam Malik was very pleased and called the person nearer to him and asked his name and then the name of his teacher.

He said: "Sir, I'm an illiterate. A young man sitting by my side was telling me the solution and I was merely repeating it."

Imam Malik now called Imam Shafaii nearer to him, looked at him intently for a few minutes and then recognised him.

"Are you not Muhammad Bin Idrees Shafaii?" He asked.

Imam Shafaii replied: "Yes sir, I am your old student."

Imam Malik embraced Imam Shafaii, got down from the chair, sat on the mat and asked Imam Shafaii to take the chair and explain in detail all the problems posed by him. Imam Shafaii obeyed his respected master and concluded that lesson by offering detailed explanation to the problems.

Imam Malik was overjoyed. He patted Imam Shafaii and prayed for him. After the Maghrib prayer, he held Imam Shafaii by hand and took him to his residence. The sight of Imam Malik's palatial residence made Imam Shafaii cry. His tears saddened Imam Malik, who said: "Shafaii, why do you cry? Do you think I have collected all this for this world and forgotten the accountability of the Day of Reckoning?"

Imam Shafaii said: "Yes, sir, I have these fears alone."

Imam Malik then explained:

"What all you are seeing here constitute the outcome of permissible income. I do pay zakat due on all my income every year regularly. The devotees spread near and far do send presentations to me. Since our beloved Prophet (pbuh) has advised us from declining the presentations, I do not return them."

Then he showed Imam Shafaii all the gifts received by him. There were dresses, horses, mules, and other things besides thousands of Dinars.

Then Imam Malik said: "Now half of all this is yours."

He wrote out the document and handed it over to his disciple.

Imam Shafaii stayed at his mentor's palace for three days. Then he proceeded to Makkah along with horses, mules, grains, clothes and Dirhams and Dinars. When Imam Shafaii had started from his house, he had only two sheets of cloth and now that he was returning home he had all this grand paraphernalia. He had already written to his mother about his arrival. She was waiting for him anxiously along

with her nieces and other ladies.

When Imam Shafaii approached Makkah, his mother met him on the outskirts of the town. She embraced her son lovingly. She was very glad but after sometime she became sad. Imam Shafaii asked the reason for her sadness.

She said: "My son, I had sent you to get education and you have returned with wealth!"

This remark made him to narrate his travelogue along with all achievements and he ended saying that what all paraphernalia she was seeing was the donations of his mentor Imam Malik.

She said: "My son, wealth turns one's head. Do you want to boast in front of your uncle's sons and cast low eyes on them?"

"Then, you tell and I shall obey", the Imam replied.

"O my son, give away all this in the name of Allah and enter the abode of Allah (Ka'aba) as a humiliated and needy person," the mother said.

So, proclamation was made: "Come, collect grains if hungry, collect clothes if naked, take Dinar and Dirhams if you are indigent – take whatever you want and is available."

In no time everything was distributed. Only a mule and fifty Dinars were left with Imam Shafaii. Everyone had received his due. They entered the city. Suddenly the whip fell down from the hands of Imam. A maid servant was carrying water. She saw, lifted it and handed it over to him. The Imam, in return, placed five Dinars in her hand.

The mother asked: "My son, do you have only these five Dinars?"

He replied: "No, mother, I had fifty Dinars, five I have given her. The rest is with me to meet any of your needs."

"Oh, my dear son, you rely on these Dinars so much, and do not care about the One Who bestows all this. Take out all the Dinars and

hand them over to that maidservant."

Imam gave the remaining forty five Dinars and arrived empty-handed to her own residence. When the news reached Imam Malik about these happenings, he congratulated Imam Shafaii and advised him to devote himself to disseminate the message of Islam. He vowed he would be sending gifts every year, Insha Allah (God willing)."

After this incident, Imam Malik lived for eleven years and every year he used to send everything he had donated first time. After the demise of Imam Malik, Imam Shafaii felt the need to earn. So he reached Yamen from Makkah. There he settled, to propagate the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), and to earn his livelihood through business. He was living comfortably there when he received a call from Haroon Rasheed. He went to Baghdad and lived there for two years. Then his tours started. He travelled through many cities and finally he reached "Fistat" where he established his famous institution. He was the chief discourser at this institution.

A number of his students earned name and fame. But the one who is most renowned was Imam Ahmed Bin Hambal. Imam Shafaii lived for 73 years. He spent all his life teaching Hadith, Fiqh and religion. He was involved in a small business, through which he could earn as much to lead a self-sufficient life for which he was thankful to Allah. He expired in 204 A.H. His wife Hazrat Umdah was the great grand daughter of the third Caliph Hazrat Usman (R.A.). She was also a great scholar.



Lesson - 4

Imam Ahmed Bin Hambal (R.A.)¹

Imam Ahmed Bin Hambal was the most renowned and great student of Imam Shafaii. He was regarded as the greatest Imam of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Even Imam Shafaii admitted that there was none in the whole of Baghdad who could compete with Ahmed Bin Hambal. He used to relate the problem taught by his teacher. While doing so he inserted his own logical and practical instructions and suggestions. Like this a separate volume of Fiqh was compiled. It is referred as Hambali Fiqh and almost fifty lakh of Arabs started to follow it in their lives.

Imam Ahmed Bin Hambal was born at Baghdad in 164 A.H. His father's name was Muhammad and the grandfather's name was Hambal. He became famous through the name of his grandfather and instead of Ahmed Bin Muhammad he was referred as Ahmed Bin Hambal. Based on this, his Fiqh compilation was referred as Fiqha-e-Hambali. He breathed his last in 241 A.H when he was 77 years of age.

He lost his father in his childhood. The father had let some shops which fetched a rent of 17 Dirhams. This was the only source of income after the death of his father. This paltry amount was utilised by the mother not only to maintain herself and the child but also to get the son educated. The mother was a very religious lady. She inspired the child to get educated. First she made him a Hafiz. By the time he was seven years old, he had memorised whole of the Glorious Qur'an. He then devoted himself to read and write.

His learning to write in his infancy helped many modest ladies whose husbands were employed in the army. They called him to

¹Rahmatullah Alaih

dictate letters to their husbands. He was very discreet in keeping their secrets to himself. So they respected him.

One of his relatives was an inspector in the secret service at Baghdad. He used to carry the news of happenings to the higher police authorities everyday. On one occasion he could not personally attend to do so. He called his nephew Ahmed and asked him to deliver the bundle to the officer with special instructions not to hand it over to anyone else. Imam was in his teens but he very well knew that the bundle consisted of news about scholars who were very noble and who prevented people from the wrong activities ordained by the Caliph. These scholars were a threat to the Caliph. So he kept them under vigil. While carrying the bundle, on the way Imam threw it in the river and returned. When the secret department did not receive the day's quota of the news, the inspector was questioned. He called Imam Ahmed and asked. He boldly said: "I have thrown the bundle in the river." Why? "Because Allah does not like the revelation of the activities of noble persons." This was his direct answer. Inspector repeated the whole incident to his officer who called the boy for further enquiry. Ahmed spoke the whole truth. The officer did not take him to task considering him to be a child. But the persons who were observing him keenly remarked: "If this child survives to live long, he would be *Hujjat* of his times." In Arabic language *Hujjat* stands for an authority who would decide every problem on the basis of Qur'anic injunctions and Sunnah instructions.

Imam Ahmed Bin Hambel sought instructions in religion, the Qur'an and the Hadith for seven years from the reputed scholars of the times present in Baghdad. His first mentor was Imam Abu Yusuf. His thirst for knowledge was still not quenched. So he travelled far and wide and learnt from various scholars. He was at Basra in 186 A.H. from where he travelled to Kufa, Madina, Syria, Hejaz and Yaman. In 186 A.H. alone he met Imam Shafaii. He was most influenced by Imam Shafaii and he adopted his methodology itself.

From childhood he developed a very healthy habit. He never extended his hand for monetary help even in dire necessities and never accepted anything in gratis. He preferred to work and earn. He knew spinning and occasionally he spun cloth and earned. This was his livelihood also.

Imam Saheb had learnt Persian language also. His reputation as a seeker after truth and knowledge and as a scholar spread far and wide. He was known equally for producing many scholars. Imam Bukhari, the renowned Muhaddis or collector of Traditions was his student. He spent the last years of his life at Baghdad from where he propagated the religion through lessons in the Hadith, Fiqh and allied subjects.

Risking the Life

Imam Ahmed Bin Hambel was a practising scholar. He never transgress the path of Allah and His Messenger (pbuh). He had to pay a very heavy price for this in an unhealthy incident. The king ruling the land at that time was misled in a particular problem concerning the Glorious Qur'an. A very wrong concept about the Holy Qur'an was made to be believed by the king. The king wanted to assert. So he proclaimed that all the scholars under his territory should believe in the concept and anyone who does not believe in it must be arrested and transported to the Capital for imprisonment or should be sent to gallows.

Among the scholars who did not yield to the ruler was Imam Ahmed Bin Hambel, who was a staunch follower of the Qur'an and the Hadith. He was regarded as the most scholarly religious leader at that time. The king thought that if Imam Ahmed declares his acceptance in the concept, all others would simply follow him. Imam refused to accept the concept declaring that unless the veracity of the concept is established by the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith, it cannot be accepted.

Obviously the concept could not be proved or established through the Qur'an or the Hadith by the king and his partisan scholars. They only tried force to make people believe in and accept what they profess. The kings are mostly like this. They want even their wrong to be taken as right. If anyone opposes, they take life out of him. We already know what happened in case of other Imams. Imam Abu Haneefa had to bear the pangs of lashes. Imam Malik had also to undergo severe punishments. Both had to suffer in prisons. Now Imam Ahmed Bin Hambel was dragged in the ring. Not one, but successively three rulers of the times turned hostile to him. They imprisoned him. They tortured him. They lashed him. The most atrocious of them was Caliph Wasiq. It is recorded that he had ordered such lashes that if they were fallen on the thick skinned elephant, it would have cried. But Imam Ahmed had such inherent strength and endurance that he would only repeat after each lashing: "Establish through Qur'an and Hadith and I will accept. Otherwise I will die and not accept."

The witnesses reported that his skin would come out after each whipping but he would not yield. One day as he was whipped, after the first lash he uttered "Bismillah". On the second he said: "La Howla Wala Quwwata Illa Billah" (There is no power or might other than that of Allah). He declared: "Show me the Qur'anic verdict," on the third lash. When the fourth one fell he recited: "Lain Yusabna Illa Ma kataballahu Lana" (Whatever calamity falls on us has already been ordained for me by Allah). He bore the torture of 29 such lashes. The thirtieth one fell on the string with which his drawers were tied. It gave up and the drawers slipped down a little. Imam Saheb was very modest. He feared he would become naked. He called God:

"Allah, if I am true, save me from nakedness."

Hardly had he uttered this prayer that his drawers drew up. Observing this happening, the ruler immediately returned to his palace. The soldiers threw Imam Ahmed in the prison. Although the

citizens of Baghdad were witnessing these atrocities every day, they revolted on that day and attacked the prison. They were shouting:

"If Imam Saheb dies in the prison, the king will be avenged."

When the king heard these calls, he got alarmed. He called a great scholar who, although a votary of the ruler, was popular among the citizens of Baghdad. On the plea of the king when he went and assured people that Imam Saheb was safe, the revolting people retired.

When asked the reason for the immediate acceptance of his supplication (prayer), Imam Saheb replied:

"My veracity, Halal (legal) livelihood and my earnest and humble imploration."

Imam Saheb tolerated these atrocities for long years.

After Wasiq when Mutawakkal usurped the throne, he released Imam Ahmed Bin Hambel from the prison. He was a devotee of Imam Saheb. Of course he could not do anything while he was not in power. But once he occupied the throne, he showered respect and gifts on Imam Saheb to the extent that Imam Saheb was perturbed and thus declared: "These mercies of the ruler are more severe and painful than the lashes." He was afraid that someday he might have to accede to a wrong committed by the king.

Let Allah bless Imam Saheb and all those who put trust in him. Let Allah grant us strength to come out successful in all tests and never to indulge in disobeying the Messenger of Allah and not to fear anybody but Allah. Ameen!



Q u e s t i o n s

1. How many Schools of Fiqh and Shariah are found in Islam? Who founded them?
2. What is the original name of:
 i) Imam Abu Haneefa ii) Imam Shafaii iii) Imam Ahmed Bin Hambel
3. "Abu Haneefa conferred a great favour on the whole of Islamic World." Do you agree with this statement. If so, justify your agreement. If not, what alternative do you propose and why?
4. Who were born in the following years? Mention the place of their birth and the year of their demise.
 i) 50 A.H. ii) 80 A.H. iii) 93 A.H. iv) 164 A.H.
5. What do you know about the early life of Imam Abu Haneefa?
6. Who were the teachers and guides of:
 i) Imam Abu Haneefa ii) Imam Malik
 iii) Imam Shafaii iv) Imam Ahmed Bin Hambel
7. What was the source of Halal income of:
 i) Imam-e-A'azam ii) Imam Shafaii
 iii) Imam Ahmed Bin Hambel iv) Imam Malik
8. Where did the following Imams conducted their classes for delivering their Knowledge of Qur'an and Hadith?
 i) Imam Abu Haneefa ii) Imam Malik
 iii) Imam Shafaii iv) Imam Ahmed Bin Hambel
9. Who is the author of *Muwatta*? What is its subject matter? Which king became the student of the author of *Muwatta*?
10. Name some distinguished students of each of the four Imams.
11. Describe the devotion of Imam Abu Haneefa to his mother.
12. i) What Hadith did Abu Haneefa follow in carrying out his business?
 ii) Narrate the incident to show that Imam Abu Haneefa was a successful businessman but not a successful shopkeeper.

13. Narrate an incident each from the lives of any of the four Imams to indicate:
- You should be considerate towards your neighbours
 - The host's hands are to be cleaned first before partaking of food and those of the guests after partaking of food
 - Whatever calamity falls on us, has already been ordained by Allah.
 - No decree can be amended to please any king.
14. i) Can a Qazi file a case against a wrongdoer in his own court and sit on judgement over the case?
- ii) Who can be a true vicegerent of Allah on the earth?
15. Who said this, to whom and when:
- "When I was delivering a discourse on Hadith you were playing with a straw like a child."
 - "The real and the true Caliph would be the one who is chosen by all Muslims and who administers Islamic state in strict accordance with Islamic Fiqh."
 - "I am sad because even if I wish I cannot provide you even two loafs of bread for consumption on your way."
 - "Does not matter if you do not like to remain here. I will make you Qazi of the place you reside in. Do accept the appointment."
 - "I have thrown the bundle in the river because Allah does not like the revelation of the activities of noble persons."
 - "I cannot go to any place leaving the city of the Prophet (pbuh). You are free to take back your presents and the money."
 - "Establish through Qur'an and Hadith and I will accept. Otherwise I will die and not accept."
 - "I shall terminate it (Hanafi Fiqh) and issue orders only to follow your Muwatta."
16. What attributes do Quraish possess? How were they discovered in Imam Shafaii when he was still in his teens?
17. What method was being used by Imam Malik to teach the science of Hadith? Do you appreciate the method or not? Justify your choice.
18. i) What are the two obligatory and one mandatory requisites of Namaz?
ii) When and why was "Kitabuz Zafran" written?

19. "It is God alone who arranges for our everyday living and provides help at the time of our needs from sources beyond our comprehension." Justify this truth from any one incident from the life of any one of the four Imams.
20. What does "Hujjat" mean? Who is referred to as Hujjat of the times among the four Imams about whom you have read?
21. What are the pre-requisites for the acceptance of supplication (Du'a) by Allah? Have you experienced such an occasion any time in your life? Describe it in a few sentences.

